

Egg Drop Soup

By Heather Tomasello and Illustrated by Elizabeth O. Dulemba

"OK, everybody. It's that time of year," said my science teacher, Mr. Beal. "This Friday we'll have the annual Egg Drop Challenge."

A couple of my classmates groaned, but no one was at all surprised. Mr. Beal's fourth-grade Egg Drop Challenge was an institution at my school. The goal of the Challenge was straightforward—you had to build a protective container to keep an egg from breaking when dropped over the stadium wall.

"Bring your containers to class on Friday," Mr. Beal said. "By the way, this year we're going to try something different. You can work alone or with a partner."

My best friend, Cassie, and I grinned at each other. We always worked on projects together. She's brainy; I'm imaginative. We're the perfect combination. Like peanut butter and marshmallow cream. (Which happens to be my favorite kind of sandwich.)

I made my favorite sandwich that afternoon while waiting for Cassie to come over and work on the container. Spreading the fluffy marshmallow cream gave me an idea.

"I have a brilliant design for our egg container!" I said when Cassie arrived.

"What?" Cassie asked eagerly.

"We can cushion it with some marshmallow cream." I waited expectantly for her to enthusiastically agree with me.

Instead, she appeared to be confused. "Huh?"

"You know, to absorb the shock of the impact," I explained.

"You've got to be kidding, Laura." She was not as supportive of this idea as I had originally thought she would be.

"You have a better idea?"

Cassie pointed to a sketch in her notebook. "Actually, I do. We put the egg in a basket with a parachute attached. It will simply float to safety."

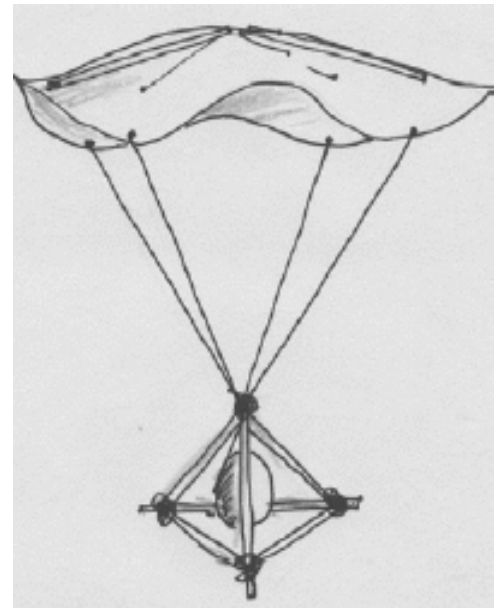
"It's too easy for something to go wrong. It will never work!" I said.

"And marshmallow cream will?" Cassie rolled her eyes. "The parachute is better than that stupid idea."

I couldn't believe it. Of course we'd had our little fights in the past, but this was different. She'd never called any of my ideas "stupid" before or insulted an idea of mine that was important to me.

"Oh yeah?" I asked, trying not to show how hurt I was.

"Yeah!" she firmly replied, clearly not changing her mind.



"Then I'll build mine and you build yours, and we'll just see whose is better," I challenged.

"Fine!" Cassie shoved her notebook into her backpack and stormed out.

And just like that, our friendship was shattered like an egg. An egg dropped from the top of a stadium without marshmallow cream to protect it.

When Friday finally rolled around, I had to admit that Cassie's Egg Force One looked pretty good. She had used a handkerchief to create a small parachute. It was tied to a basket that held Styrofoam packing peanuts and, in the center of it all, her egg.



My Egg-cellent Egg Cream didn't look quite so scientific. I had lined the sides and bottom of a small box with rice cakes. Then I'd added a layer of marshmallow cream, the egg, and a layer of Jell-O.

This is how the competition worked: All the kids in my class carried their egg containers up three stadium steps and dropped them over the side wall. If your egg broke, you were disqualified. If the egg survived, you had to walk up three more steps and drop it again. This went on until the last egg broke.

By the fourth launch, only Cassie and I remained in the competition.

"OK," Mr. Beal yelled. "Let 'em go on the count of three."

"Good luck, Laura," Cassie said, glaring at me. "You're going to need it."

I didn't respond. Instead, I gave her a fake smile. *Winning would be the sweeter revenge.*

The class called, "One, two, three!" I let go of my box.

"Ew," I heard someone say after a minute. Had my egg broken? I raced down the steps, trying to get to the bottom before Cassie did.

The sidewalk was already dotted with egg shells from previous failed drops. I finally found my brave little Egg-cellent Egg Cream. I didn't even have to open the box to see the results. Yolk and egg white mixed with yellow Jell-O seeped from the corner.

"That looks like egg drop soup, Laura," Cassie said. She was holding her Egg Force One. My heart raced. Had she won? I looked at her basket. Empty.

"My egg bounced out," she explained, pointing to a broken shell in the grass.

"I guess the pilot had an egg-jector seat," I offered.

Cassie looked at me, and her glare softened. I could see it in the corners of her eyes. She was trying not to smile. I grinned. She giggled.

“Egg-jector seat,” she said.

“Egg drop soup,” I said, laughing until I had tears in my eyes.

“A tie,” Mr. Beal said, shaking his head.

But Cassie and I knew we’d won something more important than the Egg Drop Challenge. Maybe some friendships aren’t like eggs after all. They can survive a little bouncing.

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Answer questions number 1-8. Base your answers on the passage “Egg Drop Soup.”

1. At the end of the passage, Laura feels
 - A. frustrated because her egg broke.
 - B. disappointed because there was a tie.
 - C. relieved because she and Cassie are friends again.
 - D. pleased because she had a brilliant egg container design.

2. Which sentence BEST explains what the passage is about?
 - A. Two girls discover that their friendship can survive disagreements.
 - B. Two girls are forced to work together on a science project.
 - C. Two girls learn that they need to look for other friends.
 - D. Two girls create successful science projects for school.

3. According to the passage, which event happens AFTER Laura learns about the Egg Drop Challenge, but BEFORE Cassie arrives at Laura’s house?
 - A. Cassie says the broken egg looks like egg drop soup.
 - B. Cassie tells Laura about her egg drop parachute idea.
 - C. Laura and Cassie walk up the stadium steps to drop their eggs.
 - D. Laura gets her egg drop idea while making her favorite sandwich.

4. Which sentence from the passage BEST explains what Laura and Cassie learn about their friendship?
 - A. We always worked on projects together.
 - B. They can survive a little bouncing.
 - C. Instead, I gave her a fake smile.
 - D. We’re the perfect combination.

5. Read these sentences from the passage.

Cassie looked at me, and her glare softened. I could see it in the corners of her eyes.

What mood does the author create by using the words *her glare softened*?

- A. annoyed
- B. forgiving
- C. hopeful
- D. lonely

6. Read the following sentence from the passage.

If your egg broke, you were disqualified.

If *qualified* means “eligible for a competition”, what does *disqualified* mean?

- A. not eligible for a competition
- B. being eligible for a competition again
- C. wanting to be eligible for a competition
- D. being eligible for a competition before others

7. Read the following sentences from the passage.

“Good luck, Laura,” Cassie said, glaring at me. “You’re going to need it.”

Why does Cassie wish Laura good luck?

- A. Cassie is confident that her container is stronger than Laura’s.
- B. Cassie is angry with Laura for making it to the fourth launch.
- C. Cassie is jealous of Laura because Laura’s design is better.
- D. Cassie is proud of Laura and wants her to be successful.

8. Read the sentence from the passage.

She was not as supportive of this idea as I had originally thought she would be.

What does the word *supportive* mean as used in the sentence above?

- A. to feel sympathy
- B. to share information
- C. to provide assistance
- D. to offer encouragement

An Eye out for Owls

By Scott Linstead

By following clues, this author caught owls on camera.

It was a September morning, and I was hauling a large camera through tall pines. The area was perfect for a family of great horned owls. The trees were well spaced for the owls' large wingspans. But it was the third time I'd come to this spot, and I had not yet seen any owls. Suddenly, I heard noisy crows in the distance. Crows often get together in a tree and make loud noises for no obvious reason. But sometimes they squawk a lot when they come across a raptor, a bird that hunts animals. Owls are raptors. I followed the noise and found a great horned owl.

People are often surprised to learn that many owls live in ordinary neighborhoods. One February day, I said to my friend as we drove along, "Stop the car. There's a screech owl in that tree!"

The tree was on a front lawn. Even though the driver doubted me, he stopped the car. Sure enough, an eastern screech owl stared back at us from a hole in the tree. Over the years, I have become used to looking carefully at trees for screech owls.



For many years, I had wanted to photograph a long-eared owl. I had often seen these birds in the wild, but they are hard to photograph. They hide in thick trees during the day. Like other small owls, they can be eaten by larger owls and other raptors.

One winter day, I was at a spot where three long-eared owls liked to roost in cedar trees. It was the first time I had a good view of these owls! Each one was no taller than a paper-towel tube.

I set up my camera as quickly as I could. One long-eared owl stared back at me just long enough that I could take a few pictures. Then it hopped onto a more hidden branch and disappeared.

The barred owl is a fairly large bird with deep black eyes. It allows you to get closer than other owls do. But if you happen to be a great horned owl, it won't stick around very long. It's been reported that the great horned owl might eat the barred owl!

One November, I came face-to-face with a barred owl in a swampy, wooded area. Luckily, there were no great horned owls around. This spot had been the winter home of a barred owl for many years. The only years it was not seen were those when a great horned owl lived in the area.

The fall and winter are great times to look for owls. When leaves are gone from the trees, the owls' perches are much easier to spot. Keep your eyes open for owls this season.



Answer questions number 9-16. Base your answers on the article “An Eye Out for Owls.”

9. “An Eye Out for Owls” is MAINLY about
- A. the strange noises and sounds owls make.
 - B. how owls are easy animals to photograph.
 - C. different kinds of owls and the places they can be found.
 - D. when it is the best time of year to take a picture of an owl.
10. Which detail from the article shows long-eared owls are difficult to photograph?
- A. They hide in thick trees during the day.
 - B. I set up my camera as quickly as I could.
 - C. Each one was no taller than a paper-towel tube.
 - D. Luckily, there were no great horned owls around.
11. What topic is covered in the article?
- A. owl sleeping habits
 - B. places where owls live
 - C. ways owls communicate
 - D. protecting owls from danger
12. Which pair of words from the article has almost the SAME meaning?
- A. followed, found
 - B. leaves, trees
 - C. large, deep
 - D. view, look

13. Read this sentence from the article.

Then it hopped onto a more hidden branch and disappeared.

Which word has the SAME base word as the word *disappeared*?

- A. appearing
- B. disapprove
- C. pear
- D. surprised

14. In the beginning of the article, why does the photographer conclude that there is a great horned owl in the pine trees?
- A. He hears crows making a lot of noise.
 - B. He sees the trees are spaced out well.
 - C. He notices smaller owls nearby looking for food.
 - D. He realizes it is the perfect month for seeing owls.

15. Read these sentences from the article.

The tree was on a front lawn. Even though the driver doubted me, he stopped the car.

Why does driver stop the car even though he does not believe the photographer about seeing an owl in the tree?

- A. The driver hopes to prove to the photographer he is incorrect.
- B. The driver wants the photographer to take a picture of the owl.
- C. The driver knows the photographer has experience looking closely at trees.
- D. The driver thinks the photographer will be angry with him if he does not stop the car.

16. Read this sentence from the article.

It was a September morning, and I was hauling a large camera through tall pine trees.

What does the word *hauling* mean as used in the sentence above?

- A. carrying
- B. removing
- C. sharing
- D. teaching

Science Is Everywhere

The final bell of the day rang. Brandon felt a bit anxious as he closed his science book. None of his science project ideas were any good. He was sure he would come up short for this assignment.

Mr. Diaz was standing in the doorway, saying goodbye and calling out homework reminders as students filed out the door. “What’s on your mind, Brandon?” asked Mr. Diaz when Brandon approached him.

“I’m still looking for a science project idea,” Brandon answered.

Mr. Diaz chuckled. “You’ll think of something. Just remember that science is everywhere.” Just then, a second-grader tripped and fell in the crowded hallway.

“Oops, she needs some help,” exclaimed Mr. Diaz, hurrying off.

Brandon stood for a moment, lost in thought. “Science is everywhere,” he muttered. What did that mean?

Later, when he got home, he found his sister Melinda in the kitchen. She was shaking her head over a flat, circular object with a delicious smell.

“What’s that supposed to be?” asked Brandon.

“A chocolate cake,” Melinda said. “The recipe called for a teaspoon of baking powder, but it was unavailable, so I just made the cake without it.”

“How can just a teaspoonful of something make a cake rise?” said Brandon. After sampling the failed—but tasty—cake, Brandon went outside.

There he found his dad gazing at two potted plants. One was tall, lush, and dark green, and the other was small with pale leaves.

Dad said, “These plants were identical when I bought them. Both are pepper plants, and each was six inches tall. It’s easy to guess which one I forgot to fertilize!”

Brandon’s brother Jacob approached. “Hey Dad, my friend told me that if you smash a sugar cube with a hammer, it makes a flash of light.”

Dad said, “I’ve heard that too. Let’s gather up a hammer and sugar cubes and find out.”

An idea turned on like a light bulb in Brandon’s head. He finally understood what Mr. Diaz meant! Science really was everywhere! It was in the kitchen, in the garden, and even in sugar cubes.

Now Brandon had three science projects. His only problem was deciding which one to work on!



Answer questions number 17-24. Base your answers on the article “Science is Everywhere.”

17. Which word best describes Brandon at the beginning of the passage?

- A. curious
- B. lazy
- C. helpful
- D. worried

18. What is the MOST important lesson Brandon learns in the passage?

- A. If you forget to fertilize a plant it will die.
- B. Science can be found almost anywhere you look.
- C. Baking powder is a necessary ingredient when making a cake.
- D. It is important to have a good science project if you want a good grade.

19. What happens AFTER the bell rings but BEFORE Brandon gets home?

- A. Melinda looks at her flat cake.
- B. Brandon asks his teacher for advice.
- C. Dad discovers one of his plants is almost dead.
- D. Jacob tells his dad about making a flash of light.

20. What is the theme of this passage?

- A. Always ask an adult for help when you need it.
- B. Science is the most important subject in school.
- C. Friends can give you good ideas when you need them.
- D. By keeping your eyes open you never know what you will find.

21. Read these sentences from the passage.

An idea turned on like a light bulb in Brandon's head. He finally understood what Mr. Diaz meant!

Why does the author compare Brandon's idea to a light bulb?

- A. to explain how Brandon looks when he has a new thought
- B. to prove that Brandon is a really bright student in science class
- C. to describe how Brandon suddenly realizes the solution to his problem
- D. to identify what Brandon needs to buy at the store for his science project

22. Read the following sentence from the passage.

"The recipe called for a teaspoon of baking powder, but it was unavailable, so I just made the cake without it."

If *available* means to have what is needed, what does *unavailable* mean?

- A. to not have what is needed
- B. to give away what is needed
- C. to place what is needed away
- D. to search for what is needed again

23. Why does Brandon's dad want to get a hammer and sugar cubes?

- A. He thinks they will help his plants grow larger.
- B. He needs to give them to Melinda for her cake.
- C. He tries to help Brandon with his science project.
- D. He wants to try the experiment Jacob told him about.

24. Read the following sentence from the passage.

One was tall, lush, and dark green, and the other was small with pale leaves.

What does the word *lush* mean in the sentence above?

- A. healthy
- B. lonely
- C. noisy
- D. sickly